

I am a strong supporter of providing a la carte channel choices to consumers, both from cable and satellite providers. I am taking as given that a la carte channel choice would come from the entire body of existing cable channels, rather than just the channels cable and satellite providers currently choose to carry in given markets.

Allowing a la carte choices would then provide the following advantages to consumers:

1. Consumers who are interested in only specific channels (e.g. BBC America, The Anime Network, et al) would be able to get these channels without having to also pay for dozens of other channels they do not and never will watch.
2. Consumers would no longer be forced into subsidizing channels in which they have no interest (e.g., ESPN, Encore).
3. Consumers would also be able to choose from channels that their cable providers do not currently bother to carry (e.g., History Channel International).

Cable and satellite providers, contrary to their claims, would also benefit in the following ways:

1. Large content providers (e.g. Fox Corp.) would no longer be able to blackmail cable providers into carrying specific channels from their family or be forced to lose them all based on exaggerated estimates of how many viewers they have.
2. Cable and satellite providers would be able to get a much better, specific idea of the demographics of which consumers watch which channels, providing for better pricing for cable advertising.
3. Cable and satellite providers would be able to get a much better, specific idea of the demographics of which consumers watch which channels, providing for better assessments of what bundles consumers might or might not want to watch, thereby potentially increasing revenue as well.

Cable content providers would benefit in the following ways:

1. Content providers would be able to get a much more accurate picture of who watches their channel, thereby improving advertising revenue.
2. Content providers would be able to gain access to cable systems that do not currently carry one or more of their channels.

It is highly likely that within the next few years consumers will be able to pick and choose channels directly from content providers for streaming over broadband, straight onto media servers within their homes - eliminating the middlemen (cable and satellite) altogether. The cable and satellite industry would do well to consider whether their aggressive campaign against channel choice will help them move into the future.